

Exhibit No. 8Date 2-16-09Bill No. 53217**Jackson Hole News & Guide**[Print This Page >](#)**Elk tests, kills to start***From Staff Reports**Date: January 24, 2009*

Wyoming Game and Fish wildlife managers will begin year four of a controversial elk test-and-slaughter program Sunday on three feedgrounds around Pinedale.

The experimental program was commissioned by Gov. Dave Freudenthal's Brucellosis Coordination Team as one of 28 recommendations to reduce brucellosis in northwest Wyoming.

Personnel from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and other agencies plan to conduct two elk capture operations during the weeks of Jan. 25 and Feb. 8.

Trapping efforts will be conducted at all three elk feedgrounds within the Pinedale elk herd — Muddy Creek, Scab Creek and Fall Creek feedgrounds — along the west slope of the Wind River range south of Pinedale. Trapping was done only at the Muddy Creek feedground the first two years and expanded last year to include the Fall Creek feedground.

In all, agency personnel have captured and handled just more than 1,200 elk in the first three years of the pilot project. From those animals, nearly 600 were test-eligible adult cows that were bled to test for exposure to brucellosis. Of the female elk bled, 113 tested seropositive for the disease and were removed from the population.

Additionally, there have been a total of 13 trapping-related mortalities during the program's three years. When handling such a large number of elk, capture mortality is always a possibility, officials said.

The objective of the test-and-slaughter program is to get a statistically significant reduction in brucellosis seroprevalence. With the trapping efforts at the Muddy Creek feedground to date, workers were able to capture 60 percent, 35 percent and 62 percent of the test-eligible female elk in 2006, 2007 and 2008, respectively. Brucellosis seroprevalence rates decreased from 37 percent to 16 percent to 14 percent during those same years.

About 10 percent of female elk that originally tested negative later tested positive. This happened in 2007 and 2008. This would indicate that an exposure event, such as a fetus being aborted on the feedground, likely occurred in the winter/spring of 2006 and 2007, officials said.

About \$815,000 has been spent on the test and slaughter pilot project to date. The trapping operation typically has involved 50 to 60 personnel from Game and Fish and other agencies. All blood testing is performed by Game and Fish personnel working at the Wyoming State Veterinary Laboratory in Laramie.

"Game and Fish is dedicated to completing our commitments to the Governor's Brucellosis Coordination Team," said Scott Talbott, assistant wildlife division chief for Game and Fish, in a statement. "This operation has required a large amount of department resources and is difficult for personnel who are trained as wildlife professionals. I'm proud they can complete this task in the most professional manner, knowing they are furthering our knowledge and understanding of this disease."

In addition to the removal of seropositive elk, the project enables researchers to conduct valuable research in brucellosis management, including how effective current tests are at detecting the disease, officials said.

"We're hoping to find a better predictor of brucellosis-culture-positive elk from the six blood tests we used," said Hank Edwards, Game and Fish wildlife disease specialist, in a statement. "Research of this magnitude had never been possible until this project. It's a very valuable component of the pilot project."

The research also is helping biologists determine scavenging rates on feedgrounds and the relationship between parasites, such as lungworms, and rates of brucellosis infections on feedgrounds.

Franz Camenzind, executive director of the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance, said the test and slaughter program is not a good long-term solution to the problem, regardless of how effective it eventually proves to be.

"If it shows any decrease in brucellosis prevalence, it would mean that we have to continue killing elk, which is in my mind unconscionable," he said. "It is taking potential targets away from hunters, and it is not addressing the root of the problem, which is the chronic crowding conditions on these elk feedgrounds. Also, it completely ignores the 1,000-pound gorilla just over the ridge, which is [chronic wasting disease.]"

"I think that those monies could be better put to habitat improvement projects and working with landowners to see where we might be able to help ranchers with fencing and other mechanical separation [techniques]," Camenzind said.

www.jhnewsandguide.com

307-733-2047

© 2009 Jackson Hole News&Guide
All Rights Reserved